

Queer Politics in the United States
Instructor: B Lee Aultman
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Purchase College
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Course Description:

The concept of 'queer' enlists numerous meanings, covers a wide range of identities, and has come to symbolize a growing radicalism and push against so-called mainstream rights movements, capitalism, and traditional political institutions. What was once merely understood as the gay and lesbian movement for equal protection has branched into a wide canvas of political and social struggles. The politics of recognition and gender self-determination has come to stand in for a politics of constitutional equality. A politics of expression and anti-essentialism has come to stand in for a politics of the stable duality of sex and gender. As such, this course will not focus *entirely* on the study of marriage equality, nondiscrimination laws, or the abrogation of anti-sodomy statutes. Though time will be spent on these important issues, we will look at the very diverse and growing political concerns of a range of community activism.

In order to do so, we will need to think about power in new and diverse ways. This course will provide an overview of some fundamental theories that will allow us to answer questions about our identities and thus create the conditions for an 'intersectional' analysis. We will question how race, class, (dis)ability, gender identity, sexuality, etc., overlap in such ways that empower and disempower political agency. It is my hope that we use these theories to engage each of the topics that we discuss in turn. One goal of the course will be to read through the lens of what would be conventionally 'queer' in terms of theory: a critical way of understanding the dynamics of sexed, gendered, and racialized power within social and political fields.

Course Requirements:

All course readings will be available on Moodle, unless a URL is provided in the syllabus.

Attendance (10%): Students are expected to arrive to class on time with the readings completed beforehand. Attendance sheets will be distributed at the beginning of each class.

Weekly Critical Response Papers (20%): Students are expected to write a critical response paper (2-3 pages) each week responding to one or all of the readings for that week. Responses are due every Thursday IN CLASS. **I do not accept late or emailed copies of these papers.**

Midterm Exam (30%): An essay exam with two prompts, both of which will be distributed before the exam date.

Final Presentations/Papers (40%): Students are expected to write a critical paper to be handed in at the end of the term. Students may select a topic of their choosing and with the following caveat: It must be in conversation/engagement with some set of readings from the syllabus. I expect students to be in correspondence with me about these papers. Presentations will occur at the end of the semester. Sign up sheets will be distributed as the semester proceeds.

Note: If students are in the performing arts or other such discipline, a performance piece/work of art may be selected as the final project. Please consult with me and get permission before embarking.

Academic Integrity

The Purchase College academic integrity policy, www.purchase.edu/policies/academicintegrity.aspx, explicitly forbids cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty. Plagiarism is the appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another person and the representation of them as one's own original work. Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the definition of plagiarism and the acceptable methods of attribution.

Students who have any questions or doubts about whether any activity is academically permissible should check with me.

Students with Disabilities

Students with documented physical, learning, psychological, and other disabilities are entitled to receive reasonable accommodations. To receive accommodations, students must first register with the Office of Access and Accommodations, 251-6035, COU.accommodations@purchase.edu.

A Note about Pronouns and Gender Identity

If a student has a desired address (name that does not appear on the class roster) please notify me either by email or on the class sheet which will be distributed the first day of class. Students may also notify me of their desired gender pronouns (masculine, feminine, nonbinary, neutral) by email or in person.

I go by B, not Brandon. I prefer masculine or gender-neutral pronouns (they/their).

I expect all students to respect each other in this capacity. I consider this classroom a safe space for the discussion of gender, race, sex, sexuality, and (dis)ability. Any intentional misuse of such a space will result in the offending student's being asked to leave.

Trigger Warnings

Some portions of the class reading will deal with issues of racism, transphobia, misgendering, sexual violence, and other potentially disturbing content. I will make a note before each class about such content—in many instances one can tell by the title of the content's potentially triggering nature. Please consult with me if you have questions or concerns.

January 22: Introduction to the Syllabus: Queer Theory or Queer Politics?

Week 1: What is the Political: Ideology, Politics, and Critique

Althusser, Louis, "Ideology and the State," pp. 115-126.

Schmitt, Carl, "The Concept of the Political," Excerpts.

Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction" pp. 53-65.

Week 2: Re-Learning the Alphabet: Keywords in the Study of Queer/Trans Politics

Excerpts from TSQ: "Becoming", "Biopolitics", "Cisgender", "Cisgenderism", "Gender Self-Determination", "Identity", "Intersex", "LGBT", "Performativity", "Queer", "Subaltern", "Temporality", "Transgender", "Transition", "Transphobia", "Whiteness", "Wrong Body".

Week 3: "The Straight State": How the State Re-Figures Sex and Sexuality

Canaday, Margot, "Introduction" and "Conclusion" from *The Straight State*.

Currah, Paisley, "The State," from *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*

Foucault, Michel, Excerpts from *The History of Sexuality: Vol. I*

Week 4: What is Queer about Queer Politics: A Lesson in Theory

Warner, Michael, "The Ethics of Sexual Shame," pp. 1-40.

Butler, Judith, "Critically Queer," pp. 223-242.

Sedgwick, Eve, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're so Paranoid You Probably Think This Essay is About You" pp. 124-151

Week 5: Protest Politics: Some Comments on the LGB(T) Social Movement

Smith, Raymond and Donald Haider-Markel, "Protest Politics" and "Interest Group and Social Movement Participation"

Milk, Harvey "The Hope Speech"

Vaid, Urvashi, "Speech at the March on Washington"

Gamson, Joshua. 1995. "Must Identity Movements Self-Destruct? A Queer Dilemma." *Social Problems* 42(3):390-407

Week 6: Creating Community: Identity, Geography, and Crisis

Hertz, Betti-Sue, "Queer Spaces in New York City: Places of Struggle/Places of Strength" pp. 357-370.

Walker, Rachel Loewen, "Toward a FIERCE Nomadology: Contesting Queer Geographies on the Christopher Street Pier" Available at <http://phaenex.uwindsor.ca/ojs/leddy/index.php/phaenex/article/view/3153>

Hanhardt, Christina, "The White Ghetto: Sexual Deviancy, Police Accountability, and the 1960s War on Poverty" pp. 35-80.

Smith, Raymond and Patricia Siplon, "ACTION=LIFE: Responding to AIDS on the Home Front" pp. 9-37

Week 7: Sodomy: Some Rulings from the Supreme Court

Bowers v. Hardwick; Lawrence v. Texas

Bell, Carlos, "Sex" pp. 199-247.

Week 8: The Marriage Question: The 'Promise' of Equality

Bell, Carlos, "Marriage" pp. 151-198

Warner, Michael, "Beyond Gay Marriage" pp. 81-147

Farrow, Kenyon, "Is Gay Marriage Anti-Black" <http://kenyonfarrow.com/2005/06/14/is-gay-marriage-anti-black/>

Week 9: Bringing in Other Voices: The Need for Gender Pluralisms

Currah, Paisley, "Gender Pluralisms Under the Transgender Umbrella" pp. 3-31

Stryker, Susan, "Transgender Liberation" pp. 59-89

Week 10: Trans Rights and the Struggle for Recognition

Minter, Shannon Price, "Do Transsexuals Dream of Gay Rights? Getting Real about Transgender Inclusion" pp. 141-159.

Denny, Dallas, "Transgender Communities of the United States in the Late Twentieth Century" pp. 171-185

Spade, Dean, "Compliance is Gendered: Struggling for Gender Self-Determination in a Hostile Economy" pp. 217-233

Week 11: Disposable Intersections: Race, Gender Identity/Expression, and (Dis)ability

Snorton, C. Riley and Jin Haritaworn, "Trans Necropolitics: A Transnational Reflection on Violence, Death, and the Trans of Color Afterlife" pp. 66-76.

Lamble, Sarah "Retelling Racialized Violence, Remaking White Innocence: The Politics of Interlocking Oppressions in Transgender Day of Remembrance" pp. 30-45

Excerpts from "Crip Theory"

Weeks 12 and 13: The Limits of Law and Radical Queer/Trans Critiques

Spade, Dean *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law*

Week 14: Queering the Everyday: A Review

Weeks 15 and 16: Student Presentations